There are quite a few myths about careers. Commonly we hear this from students: "I haven’t got a clue what I want to do; I must be a hopeless case". This implies that the student thinks they will never be able to change the situation and the way they feel about it. This is rarely true. A normal reaction for those who feel like this is to wait for inspiration to strike. In our experience this never supplies any answers. The solution is a bit more prosaic. There is action you can take to help yourself. It will require some thinking and research but you will get there. Our role at the Careers and Employability Service is to help you through a process of deciding on what you want to do. We cannot tell you what job you should do but with our support you should be able to work through it yourself and come up with a plan.

We recommend you take a little time and use the resources of the centre as soon as you can. Use the structured approach outlined here to help you. This should increase your chances of getting a job you will enjoy. You can apply those excellent research, planning and evaluation skills that you have developed through your studies. Talking with a Careers Adviser is part of the process. Use this leaflet to prepare yourself for a meeting with one of them.

I want a job not a process?

So what is this process that will help you find out what to do with the rest of your life? There are four stages to it. Look at the outline here:

Thinking about yourself
Your Skills
Interests
Motivations

Finding out about jobs
What is available out there?
What do they involve?

Making Decisions
How can I make the best choice for me?

Taking Action
Where are the jobs?
When are they advertised?
How do I make applications?

This process works for a lot of people although you do not need to follow it slavishly in this order. The first part involves a bit of self-reflection. For most of us this does not come naturally. Think about the sort of person you are: your skills, interests, temperament, your motivations and your values. The second involves following up on job ideas which you may have had. This will help you to find out more about what jobs involve and how you react to them. In turn this will enable you to discover more about yourself. These two activities should help you build up your ideal job description. You might even begin to develop your shortlist of careers that interest you.

The next stage is to decide which options you will pursue. Use a Careers Adviser to talk through the pros and cons of your options. Are you ready to put your plan into action? This is the final stage. Where and when are the positions advertised? How do you apply and by when? There is a wealth of material at the centre to help you. Getting to grips with this process will help you to manage your career effectively in the future too. The following outlines the first two steps in more detail.
Thinking about your career

Thinking about yourself
You will probably be happiest in a job that utilises the skills and talents you enjoy using the most. University gives you the opportunity to get involved in a wide variety of activities. Jot down some of the things that have given you a buzz, and reflect on things you have done. Why not use the opportunity of putting your CV together to get you thinking too? Focus on what skills you have to offer an employer.

Also consider what you want from a job. Your personal preferences are important in your choice. For example, different things motivate each of us and these will be what give us satisfaction in a job. Use the Careers Brainstormer to help you identify what is important to you. Have you thought about location, personal factors such as relationships, lifestyle, and future family? What do you want to avoid?

All of this provides you with a useful basis for a discussion with a Careers Adviser. For an even more structured approach use the web-based careers guidance programme Prospects Planner. It asks you questions about your skills, interests and motivations. Don’t expect answers at this stage. You are generating ideas that will need more exploration.

Finding out about jobs
You may find that the reflecting you have done has generated some ideas you want to investigate. How are you going to explore them to see if they are the right fit for you? Build up your knowledge by:

Narrowing down to the most likely or most interesting ones. You can't look at all jobs.

Reading available careers material, both hard copy and on the Web - use the resources on our website.

Clarifying the aspects of a job that are not covered well in written sources e.g. lifestyle implications.

Exploring ways in which the same occupation can differ when carried out in different employment sectors e.g. marketing in manufacturing and charities.

Talking to people about their work. Use the alumni database and use networking skills to find your own contacts.

Looking for vacation work or organising your own work shadowing or work experience.

What Next?
By now you will have started to develop some criteria for yourself which you can use to compare with jobs you find out about. All this research should enable you to make an informed choice. Remember there is unlikely to be only one job that would suit you. This choice need not be for life although there are some options which may cut you off from other choices. But if you have researched thoroughly you will know this and be able to factor it into your decision. In certain sectors it is necessary to take a series of steps to get to the position you really want. A Careers Adviser can help you to weigh up the pros and cons of the options facing you. If you have made some decisions it is time to move on to planning your strategy. Look at our website for information on job hunting and to make an appointment

www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/students

Useful links
- www.prospects.ac.uk >Career Centre> Use your qualification
- www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/students Where to Start menu
- www.windmillsprogramme.com
- Prospects Planner: www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Pplanner
- Profiling for success

We're here to help, get in touch:

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This publication is available in alternative formats
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Printed September 2013.
Information correct at time of print.